

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-17 and 19-21 are all of the pending claims, with claims 1, 17 and 21 being written in independent form. By virtue of this Amendment, Applicants cancel claims 2 and 18, without prejudice or disclaimer, and add new independent claim 21.

I. Allowable Subject Matter:

The Examiner indicates that claims 2-4, 10-14, 18 and 20 would be allowable if they were rewritten in independent form. To capture allowable subject matter, Applicants amend independent claim 1 by including the subject matter of allowable claim 2 (which is canceled). Applicants also amend independent claim 17 by incorporating the subject matter of allowable claim 18 (which is canceled). Finally, Applicants add new claim 21, which includes the subject matter of claim 1 and allowable claim 4. In view of the allowable subject matter indications, the Examiner should allow independent claims 1, 17 and 21 in the next Patent Office paper. The Examiner should also allow claims 3-16, 19 and 20 by virtue of their dependencies from allowable claims 1 and 17.

II. Claim Rejection on Prior Art Grounds:

The Examiner rejects claims 1, 5-7, 8-9, 15-17 and 19 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being obvious over US 5,844,186 to Meriwether ("Meriwether") in view of US 6,559,745 to Yamagata et al. ("Yamagata").

As noted above in section I, Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 17 by incorporating allowable subject matter (as indicated by the Examiner). Such amendments are believed to render the raised prior art rejection moot.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, Applicants earnestly solicits reconsideration and allowance of all of the pending claims.

Should there be any matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the telephone number of the undersigned below.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 08-0750 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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